

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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P R 242047Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2276
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
USSOUTHCOM
AOMCONSUL CALI
AMCONSUL BARRANQUILLA
AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PINS, CO
SUBJ: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. PRESIDENT LOPEZ CALLED A MEETING OF THE FOUR CANDIDATES FOR THE LIBERAL PARTY PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION, IN AN APPARENT ATTEMPT TO PROMOTE PARTY UNITY. THE MAJOR TRADE UNION ORGANIZATIONS HAVE DEMANDED 50 PERCENT WAGE INCREASES TO COMBAT THE EFFECTS OF INFLATION, AND THERE IS TALK ABOUT A POSSIBLE GENERAL WORK STOPPAGE TO ENFORCE THESE DEMANDS. THE GOVERNMENT INCREASED LEGAL RESERVE REQUIREMENTS FOR BANKS AS AN ANTI-INFLATIONARY MEASURE. POLITICAL VIOLENCE CONTINUED AT A NORMAL LEVEL AND SIX KIDNAPPINGS WERE REPORTED DURING THE WEEK. TWO SENIOR US NARCOTICS OFFICIALS MET WITH PRESIDENT LOPEZ CONCERNING INCREASED COOPERATION IN NARCOTICS CONTROL EFFORTS.

2. CANDIDATES FOR THE LIBERAL PARTY PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION MEET WITH PRESIDENT LOPEZ. PRESIDENT LOPEZ CALLED A MEETING
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JUNE 21 OF THE LIBERAL PARTY'S FOUR PRE-CANDIDATES FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION, FOLLOWING A SPATE OF INVECTIVE BETWEEN JULIO CESAR TURBAY AYALA AND SUPPORTERS OF EX-PRESIDENT CARLOS LLERAS RESTREPO. THE NORMALLY PHLEGMATIC TURBAY'S SURPRISINGLY EARTHY AND PERSONAL PUBLIC REMARKS QUESTIONING THE MANHOOD OF HIS OPPONENTS RECEIVED CONSIDERABLE NEGATIVE COMMENT, AND MAY HAVE BEEN AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT

IN THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION TO ASSERT MORE CONTROL OVER THE DIVIDED PARTY. TWO PRE-CANDIDATES, HERNANDO AGUDELO VILLA AND CARLOS HOLMES TRUJILLO, WERE UNABLE TO ATTEND THE FIRST MEETING BUT MET WITH LOPEZ ON JUNE 22. THE TWO MEETINGS APPARENTLY EMPHASIZED THE NEED FOR PARTY UNITY AND DISCUSSED TACTICS TO BE USED IN OBTAINING CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL OF LEGISLATION SEPARATING THE 1978 CONGRESSIONAL AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. PERHAPS OF MORE IMPORTANCE WAS THE PRESIDENT'S INITIATIVE IN OPENING A DIALOGUE AMONG THE LIBERAL PARTY'S VARIOUS FACTIONS AND IN ASSERTING HIS RARELY EXERCISED ROLE AS PARTY LEADER. FOLLOWING THE MEETINGS WITH THE PRESIDENT, CAMPAIGNING CONTINUED FOR ALL FOUR PRE-CANDIDATES, WITH EX-PRESIDENT LLERAS DELIVERING THE FIRST OF SEVERAL PLANNED POLICY SPEECHES (COPY BEING POUCHED TO ARA/ AND).

3. UNREST OVER INFLATION GROWS AMONG UNIONS. THE MAJOR TRADE UNION ORGANIZATIONS APPEAR CLOSE TO AGREEMENT ON THE NEED FOR A 50 PERCENT WAGE INCREASE FOR ALL WORKERS TO COMBAT THE EFFECTS OF INFLATION ON REAL WAGES. LEADERS OF THE DEMOCRATIC CENTRAL ORGANIZATIONS, THE UTC AND THE CTC, CALLED FOR SUCH AN INCREASE, AND ADVISED THEIR AFFILIATES TO ATTEMPT TO RE-NEGOTIATE 50 PERCENT RAISES IN THEIR CURRENT CONTRACTS. UNION OFFICIALS HAVE DISCUSSED THE POSSIBILITY OF HOLDING A 24-HOUR GENERAL STRIKE IN JULY TO PROTEST THE FAILURE OF THE GOC TO CONTROL INFLATION. THE COMMUNIST PARTY, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MEANWHILE, ANNOUNCED IT WILL STAGE A HOUSEWIVES' DEMONSTRATION ON JULY 7, WITH EMPTY POTS AND PANS, TO PROTEST THE RAISING COST OF LIVING. A DECISION BY THE UTC OR THE CTC TO PARTICIPATE IN DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST GOC ECONOMIC POLICIES WILL HAVE TO AWAIT THE RETURN OF TOP LEADERS FROM THE ILO MEETING IN GENEVA.

4. GOVERNMENT TAKES ADDITIONAL MONETARY MEASURES. THE BANKING SYSTEM IN COLOMBIA CONTINUES ABSORBING THE INFLATION BURDEN. THIS WEEK MONETARY AUTHORITIES INCREASED THE LEGAL RESERVE REQUIREMENTS BY 3 POINTS TO 46.5 PERCENT BY WHICH THEY EXPECT TO FREEZE AN ADDITIONAL 1.8 BILLION PESOS. BNKERS ASKED FOR CHANGES IN THE MONETARY POLICY COMPLAINING THAT ALL MEASURES TAKEN SO FAR HAVE NOT OBTAINED THE EXPECTED RESULTS. THE BANKERS ADVOCATED A FREE EXCHANGE RATE.

5. PUBLIC ORDER. IN RURAL COLOMBIA THIS WEEK, FARC GUERRILLAS FORCEABLY OCCUPIED TWO SMALL TOWNS, KILLED TWO POLICEMEN AND STOLE WEAPONS AND POLICE UNIFORMS. IN OTHER INCIDENTS, TWO FARC GUERRILLAS AND A MEMBER OF THE CUBAN-LINE ELN WERE KILLED IN CLASHES WITH ARMY TROOPS. POLICE

REPORTED THE DISCOVERY OF THE BODY OF A DECAPITATED PEASANT WHO HAD BEEN KIDNAPPED EARLIER IN THE MONTH BY A FARC COLUMN; HIS EXECUTION WAS VIEWED AS A WARNING TO SECURITY FORCES WHO HAVE SCORED SEVERAL RECENT SUCCESSES AGAINST THE FARC. A TOTAL OF SIX PERSONS ARE KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN KIDNAPPED THIS WEEK, FIVE OF THEM IN BOGOTA WITHIN A 24-HOUR PERIOD. THREE OF THE VICTIMS WERE FREED BY POLICE WITHIN A FEW DAYS AND SEVERAL SUSPECTS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED. IN THIS AND PERHAPS IN SOME OF THE OTHER CASES, THE KIDNAPPINGS APPEAR TO BE THE WORK OF COMMON CRIMINALS RATHER THAN POLITICAL TERRORISTS. A TOTAL OF EIGHT SMALL BOMBS WERE PLACED IN PUBLIC AREAS IN MEDELLIN AND ARMENIA BY UNKNOWN PERSONS, BUT LUCKILY ALL BUT ONE WERE FOUND BEFORE EXPLODING AND THERE WERE NO INJURIES.

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6. PRESIDENT LOPEZ MEETS WITH US NARCOTICS OFFICIALS. A MEETING ON JUNE 22 BETWEEN PRESIDENT LOPEZ AND DR. PETER BOURNE, DIRECTOR OF THE WHITE HOUSE OFFICE OF DRUG ABUSE AND MS. MATHEA FALCO, SENIOR ADVISOR TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS MATTERS, WAS CORDIAL AND BROUGHT ASSURANCES ON BOTH SIDES OF INCREASED COOPERATION IN JOINT NARCOTICS CONTROL EFFORTS. (BOGOTA 5809)

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